

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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STATUS REVIEW OF AMERICAN GINSENG PLANT

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that it is undertaking a review of the status of American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius). The review will determine whether this plant should be proposed for listing as endangered or threatened, in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

American ginseng originally occurred in much of the Eastern United States and adjacent Canada, but overcollecting and habitat modification have severely depleted it in much of its former range. The plant has been harvested from the wild for its roots, which are alleged to be of value as a panacea and aphrodisiac, since the early 18th century. Since the late 19th century American ginseng has also been cultivated. Most of the roots are exported to the Far East, primarily Hong Kong.

Persons with information relating to the biological or commercial status of this species are invited to write the Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240. All comments should be submitted by October 11, 1977.

Many States have laws designed to conserve wild plants and to protect plant resources on private land. In a few cases statutes have been passed, such as the Michigan Endangered Species Act of 1974, that pertain specifically to the conservation of American ginseng. Furthermore, most States also lack provisions and State statutes do not provide uniform controls for the harvest of wild ginseng. Consequently, the Service believes that American ginseng may benefit from the provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The Service has information that American ginseng has been observed in the wild in at least the following States: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. In addition, American ginseng has been observed in the wild in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba, Canada.

The Service is seeking the views of the Governors of all the above States and the Government of Canada concerning the biological and commercial status of American ginseng. Other interested parties are invited to submit any factual information, including publications and written reports, which are germane to this status review.

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